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door of the hotel. Frank E. Hooper entered, spick and span as if a troubled Channel and grimy railway were not. He was followed by a rotund personage, olive-green in complexion, bearing all the outward and visible signs of an inward obsequiousness. The sight of this stranger gave me an indefinable thrill, a compound of surprise and fear, with perhaps a touch of bewilderment. Why, I cannot tell, but I knew him instantly. I was so taken aback that I found myself staring stupidly at Hooper, who advanced with a cheery cry:

"Well now! who'd have thought to find you both here, and looking so fine and dandy too? This is real good." winked at us portentously. Steindal!" he muttered in a stage aside. Met him in the Gare du Nord and talked him into coming to this hotel. Guessed you'd like to see him."

We are delighted," said Karl gently. Won't you introduce us?"

"Eh? Oh, this is great! Mr. Steindal, lend me thine ear a moment. I want to make you and my good friends known to one another. Mr. Karl Grier-"

No sooner did Steindal hear Karl's name than he flushed uncomfortably and backed away. He was perturbed so greatly that Hooper's flow of language stopped abruptly.

But Karl advanced a pace, and there was a steady dominance in his glance which seemed to fascinate while it disconcerted the whilom dramatic agent.

"It is indeed a pleasure to meet you," he said. "Come and dine with us. Come just as you are. And you too, Hooper. It's too late to change." out another spoken word he wheeled toward the restaurant, walking across the vestibule with head erect.

And we three followed Steindal with the sulkiness of a stricken dog, Hooper somewhat awed by the unexpected outcome of the surprise he had planned, and I-well, I felt as though some wizard had converted me into an electric eel.

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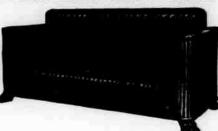
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